



Jeb Bush  
Governor

# Department of Environmental Protection

Southeast District  
P.O. Box 15425  
West Palm Beach, Florida 33416

David B. Struhs  
Secretary

June 20, 2002

Ms. Patricia Strayer  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33416

Re: Adaptive Protocols for Lake Okeechobee Operations

Dear Ms. Strayer:

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Adaptive Protocols for Lake Okeechobee Operations, and commends District staff for the time and effort that was put into this document. The Adaptive Protocols represent the first step towards managing the Lake for the health of the Lake. The Department offers the following comments on the Draft document.

The document lays out a number of feedback loops through which input is sought for the management of the system. The Department would like to take an active role in this process and as you know has participated in past meetings. Therefore, the Protocols should specifically define the Department's role in the process. It is not our intent to dictate to the District how to manage the system. We do feel however that we have an extensive knowledge base that could be helpful throughout the process. Our specific areas of interest center around overall water quality implications and the salinity impacts of coastal discharges. The Department would also like to see the document better define how water supply and environmental needs will be balanced. The Protocols, although trying to further explain this relationship, lack a full description of how this will be accomplished. Thought should be given to additional modeling that can be done to further characterize the risk to water supply by making releases for environmental benefits in Zone D and below.

The document only defines biological performance measures and how they are applied. It would be beneficial, to further clarify how performance measures are weighted when taking specific actions, i.e., which performance measures will or should have higher priority. Additionally, the document states that biological indicators are used to evaluate the health of the Lake, but little detail is given. This information should be more clearly identified and explained.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the document and we look forward to the implementation of the Adaptive Protocols. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at (772) 398-2806.

Sincerely,

John P. Mitnik, P.E.  
Environmental Administrator  
Southeast District Branch Office

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